

## In brief

**AMA executive accused of illegal sacking:** A Missouri judge has ruled illegal the attempted firing of a radiologist by hospital executive Dr E Ratcliffe Anderson, who is now executive vice president of the American Medical Association and who was involved in the firing of Dr George Lundberg, former editor of *JAMA*. The judge said that he had not followed the proper procedures.

**UK screening programme missed cancers:** The poor standard of care provided by the East Devon breast screening service led to cancers being missed in 24 women and to a delay in diagnosis in a further 61. Eleven of the women have died. The radiologist in charge of the unit, Dr John Brennan, has been reported to the General Medical Council.

**US euthanasia campaigner jailed:** Dr Jack Kevorkian, the American euthanasia campaigner, has been sentenced to between 10 and 25 years in jail for administering a lethal injection to a terminally ill man. Kevorkian has admitted to helping at least 130 people to die but this was the first time he was known to have given the fatal dose himself (3 April, p 892).

**People with severe mental illness are turned away from care:** The UK National Schizophrenia Fellowship says that 1 in 3 people with severe mental illness are turned away from care when they need it, and 1 in 4 people have been refused admission to a hospital. The charity has called for a strong inspectorate to monitor care.

**Nestlé loses appeal:** Nestlé has failed to overturn a ruling by the Advertising Standards Authority that one of its advertisements "went too far." The advertisement, published in 1996, said that Nestlé had always marketed its infant formula "ethically and responsibly." Baby Milk Action, a non-profit organisation, complained about the advertisement and, in January, its complaint was upheld (13 February, p 417).

## An egg a day is not harmful

Janice Hopkins Tanne, *New York*

Two prospective studies covering almost a decade have shown that healthy people did not increase their risk of heart disease or stroke by eating one egg a day (*JAMA* 1999;281:1387-94).

It's not eggs but other dietary and lifestyle choices that are the problem. "Egg consumption was positively associated with smoking, lower physical activity, and a generally unhealthy eating pattern," the researchers report.

Men and women who ate eggs were more likely to eat bacon, and men were more likely also to consume whole milk, red meat, and bread, and less likely to consume skimmed milk, chicken, vegetables, and fruit. Findings were less clear in women.

Study coauthor Dr Frank B Hu, a nutritional epidemiologist at the Harvard School of Public Health, said: "Eggs are a controversial food in the nutrition community. They are high in cholesterol. One egg contains about 210 mg of cholesterol. Because of that, it was believed that egg consumption caused heart disease, although there are no direct scientific data."



DARYL SOLOMON/PHOTONICA

It's OK to go to work on an egg

Many studies have looked at the effect of egg consumption on serum cholesterol, but few if any have looked at the link between egg consumption and heart disease.

The study, part of two ongoing studies at Harvard, included 80 000 women in the nurses' health study and 40 000 men in the health professionals' follow up study. Participants answered lengthy questionnaires about health status and dietary habits.

People were included in the egg study if at outset they did not have cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypercholesterolaemia, or cancer. Outcome measures of non-fatal myocardial infarction,

fatal coronary heart disease, and stroke were related to participants' reported egg consumption, which ranged from almost none to two or more per day.

One egg a day did not have an impact on heart disease or stroke in healthy men and women. Either the effect of dietary cholesterol from eggs is not as great as was thought, or it is counterbalanced by beneficial nutrients in eggs or dietary cholesterol is so high in the usual Western diet than an egg here or there doesn't matter.

Only in a subgroup of people with diabetes was there an increased risk of coronary heart disease. □

## Former *JAMA* editor starts electronic journal

Janice Hopkins Tanne, *New York*

The first entirely electronic general medical journal has been launched, on the internet with Dr George Lundberg as editor in chief. Called *Medscape General Medicine*, it is published by Medscape, a leading internet medical site ([www.Medscape.com](http://www.Medscape.com)).

The journal is free to Medscape's subscribers, who number more than one million and who include 180 000 physicians, almost 600 000 healthcare professionals, and 300 000 consumers.

Dr Lundberg, who was fired in January after 17 years as editor of *JAMA*, the Journal of the American Medical Association, told the *BMJ* that papers for the new journal must be submitted electronically, peer reviewed

electronically, edited electronically, and published electronically. There will be no paper edition.

"We won't have issues by the week or month. We'll publish any day, any time the manuscripts are ready. We hope to post every day. What is new will get a prominent place on our website, carry a date of publication, and then be archived indefinitely."

Dr Lundberg said that he had already received papers and sent them to reviewers. Concise writing is important because reviewers have less patience reading off a screen.

"If they're well done papers and don't require a lot of revision, I imagine we can review and post the papers in a few

weeks or even faster. The human element will retard it—slowness on the part of editors, reviewers, or authors," he said.

Conventional journals have begun a fast track system for publishing important papers within about a month. *MedGenMed*, as the journal is nicknamed, will have an editorial board of about 20 that is still in formation, call on about 3000 peer reviewers, and ask authors to abide by the guidelines of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (the Vancouver group).

Names of peer reviewers will not be listed with the article. Dr Lundberg would not comment on the impact his new journal might have on conventional journals and the revenue they bring to their societies.

"The whole Medscape site is supported by advertising and sponsorship," he said. At present, *MedGenMed* will not carry classified ads. □